



Morning Alert - Thursday, March 16, 2017

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## HEADLINES

### Morning news

NHK gave top play to a report on the general elections in the Netherlands. NTV and Fuji TV led with reports that actor Tsunehiko Watase died at the age of 72 on Tuesday. TBS gave top play to a report that a nonfiction writer told reporters that an incumbent cabinet minister gave money to Moritomo Gakuen President Kagoike. TV Asahi led with a report that Samurai Japan beat Israel in a World Baseball Classic game on Wednesday.

All papers except Nikkei gave prominent top coverage to a unanimous decision by the Supreme Court yesterday making it illegal for police to use GPS equipment for investigations without court warrants.

## INTERNATIONAL

### Secretary Tillerson arrives in Tokyo

Most papers reported that Secretary of State Tillerson arrived at Haneda Airport last night to hold talks with Prime Minister Abe and Foreign Minister Kishida today, projecting that they will affirm stronger bilateral coordination in dealing with North Korea's nuclear and missile development and China's maritime advancement. The Secretary is expected to update the two Japanese officials on the status of the ongoing review by the Trump administration of its policy toward the DPRK. The Secretary will reportedly solicit advice and requests from Japan, China, and South Korea to be reflected in the new U.S. policy. Secretary Tillerson and FM Kishida are also expected to agree to hold a 2+2 foreign and defense ministerial meeting at an early date.

Yomiuri said since the “pro-Russia” businessman-turned-diplomat has few connections with Japan and Asia, this trip will present him with a good opportunity to deepen his understanding of the region. Noting that his refusal thus far to take questions from journalists has caused controversy in the U.S. media, the daily said the joint press availability with FM Kishida planned for this afternoon will be the first time to hear the Secretary’s responses to questions from the press corps.

### **No trilateral summit with China, South Korea in first half of this year**

Asahi reported that the Abe administration has given up on convening a trilateral summit with China and South Korea in Japan in the first half of this year since South Korea plans to hold a presidential election in May and China has been reluctant about such a meeting ahead of the Communist Party’s convention in the autumn where a major leadership reshuffle is planned. While Tokyo may try to arrange a summit after the convention in China, heightened tension between Seoul and Beijing over the controversial THAAD deployment may become a major impediment.

### **Japanese envoy calls for removal of comfort woman statue in Busan**

Yomiuri took up remarks made to LDP legislators yesterday by Japanese Ambassador to South Korea Nagamine, in which he urged the ROK government to remove the comfort women memorial installed in front of the Japanese Consulate General in Busan ahead of the planned presidential election in South Korea on May 9. The Japanese side is set to renew its calls for the swift removal of the statue out of concern that anti-Japanese sentiment may intensify among Korean voters in the run-up to the election for President Park’s successor.

### **Japan to propose cruises to Northern Territories**

Yomiuri reported that during an upcoming vice foreign ministerial meeting with Russia in Tokyo over the weekend, the GOJ is expected to put forward a range of ideas concerning “joint economic activities” on the Northern Territories, including cruises to the contested islands, “remote medicine” for Russian residents, and the construction of hotels and port facilities. The Japanese side will also propose conducting joint feasibility studies on those initiatives, as Prime Minister Abe is hoping to forge an official consensus with President Putin when he visits Russia in late April on implementing specific joint economic projects on the disputed territories.

Mainichi wrote that Japan and Russia plan to hold a 2+2 foreign and defense ministerial meeting next week for the first time in more than three years, noting that Tokyo is hoping to deepen mutual cooperation with Moscow to hold China and North Korea in check.

## **ECONOMY**

### **Japan alarmed by USTR nominee’s comment on agricultural trade**

All papers reported extensively that the Japanese government is deeply concerned about remarks made by USTR-designate Lighthizer during his Senate confirmation hearing that Japanese

agriculture is a “primary target” for market opening. They speculated that once confirmed, the “tough negotiator” will demand that Japan make greater concessions in the planned bilateral economic dialogue than it did under the TPP on such items as rice, beef, and pork. Nikkei wrote that the Trump administration will probably also address the bilateral auto trade imbalance, noting that Japanese officials are bracing for Lighthizer’s extremely tough negotiating style that he demonstrated when he was Deputy USTR under the Reagan administration. The paper added that the Japanese side is set to play up its willingness to cooperate with U.S. infrastructure investment in the economic dialogue with the goal of preventing the U.S. from focusing on bilateral auto and agricultural trade.

Yomiuri said the GOJ is likely to exclude the agriculture vice minister from the economic dialogue delegation based on the judgment that his participation may prompt the U.S. side to conclude that Tokyo is ready to discuss farm trade bilaterally. Instead, the vice ministers of MOF, METI, MOFA, and MLIT will represent the Japanese side. Asahi speculated that the USTR nominee voiced a tough line toward Japan perhaps in response to lobbying by the cattle industry, which is concerned that its advantageous trade arrangements with Japan will be lost following the Trump administration’s decision to withdraw from the TPP. Noting that Commerce Secretary Ross and National Trade Council Director Navarro are equally tough on Japan, the daily quoted an unnamed senior MOF official as saying that the economic dialogue may “break down” if the U.S. demands bilateral trade negotiations.

### **TPP members reconfirm significance of free trade accord**

Several papers reported on the conclusion on Wednesday of a two-day TPP ministerial meeting held in Chile, saying that the participants issued a joint statement confirming the “strategic and economic significance” of the regional free trade arrangement. They stopped short of reaching a consensus on whether or not to seek new members or effectuate the existing pact without U.S. participation. The member states plan to hold another conference in May on the sidelines of an APEC trade ministers’ meeting.

## **SECURITY**

### **Suga holds talks with new Okinawa vice governor**

Asahi reported that Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga met with new Okinawa Vice Governor Tomikawa at the Kantei yesterday, quoting the visitor as telling the press afterward: “I asked for an early meeting on the reduction of the base burden at MCAS Futenma.” Although the former academic is expected to build and strengthen a communication channel with the Abe administration, just as his predecessor Ageda did, the Kantei is in no mood to make any concessions on Futenma relocation. The Defense Ministry plans to undertake landfill work in the near future.

In a related story, Sankei said the Abe administration will probably ask the court to issue an emergency stay if Okinawa Governor Onaga chooses to thwart the FRF construction by cancelling the landfill permit. The central government is also likely to file a separate lawsuit asking the court to reject such a cancellation.

### **GSDF concealed “daily reports” filed by engineering unit in South Sudan**

Most papers reported that the GSDF, in addition to a Defense Ministry section, had apparently retained “daily reports” filed by a GSDF battalion deployed in South Sudan on UN peacekeeping operations even though the ministry said at one point last December that those records had already been “deleted.” The electronic versions of the daily reports in question were later found to have been retained by the ministry’s Joint Staff Office. The papers criticized the GSDF for having misled the Diet by concealing the data while saying publicly that it had already been “destroyed.” Defense Minister Inada plans to announce today the launch of an internal investigation into the latest allegation.

### **Japan, UK to exchange memorandum on joint development of stealth aircraft**

Nikkei wrote that the Japanese and British governments are expected to exchange a memorandum on joint research of technology to be used for next-generation stealth fighters. The GOJ will decide by the end of FY2018 whether or not the next-generation fighter codenamed FX will be assembled domestically or through international collaboration.

